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AGO PRS Report 498

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MEMORANDUM TO: Col. Richardson

THROUGH: Captain Bittner

SUBJECT: Recommendations for Further Research on Leadership.

The studies described below are based upon the analysis of the leadership problem presented in PMS Report dated April 23, 1943, "Summary of the Status of the Measurement of Leadership". This report has suggested that a comprehensive program of research is necessary before any real progress can be expected. It has pointed out the three major areas for research: analysis of criteria, development of measurement techniques, and training and evaluation. Several of the studies to be suggested may be considered impractical in the light of present attitudes toward the amount of effort and time that should be expended on the study of leadership. Since these attitudes are subject to change with time, it was considered desirable to use importance and promise of contributing to the solution of the leadership problem as the criterion for inclusion of research suggestions.

Criterion Studies

1. Relation of Officer Candidate School Leadership Ratings to Combat Performance-- The purpose of this study would be to determine the degree to which officer candidate school ratings are predictive of actual performance in a theatre of operation. A possible by-product would be data on relationships of field performance to life history data. Future progress in the solution of the leadership problem depends in good part upon the establishment of officer candidate school leadership ratings as valid predictors of combat performance. These ratings are the most accessible criteria for use in leadership studies. Therefore, it is vital to test their relevance.

To collect the required data it would be desirable that a representative of the Personnel Research Section be sent to the theatre of operation. As the arm which produces the greatest number of officers, the Infantry seems to be an ideal source for this study. The North African theatre of operations would probably provide the largest source of field ratings in Infantry. It is proposed that company commanders of Infantry be asked to designate which commissioned officer platoon leader they considered most valuable to and which leader they considered least valuable to their company. Another method of securing ratings might be to give the company commander a list of possible platoon duties and ask him to indicate which of his platoon leaders he would expect to be most successful in their execution.

It should be possible to collect groups of between 50 to 100 "most and least valuable" platoon leaders. It is probable that all or most of these officers will be graduates of the Infantry School. Other information collected would be as follows:

- a. In the field:
 - Name
 - Army Serial Number
 - Types of action participated in

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Date of arrival in theatre

It may be possible to arrange to secure all of the information from Form 66-1; e.g., test scores, occupational history, military history, hobbies, recreational activities, etc.

- b. From the 201 file, AG 1:
When an UCS graduate is commissioned, his Form 20 goes into the 201 File, AGO. The information from the Form 20 could be used to supplement or substitute for the information from Form 66-1.
- c. From the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia:
Leadership ratings
Academic ratings
Any anecdotal materials that should happen to be available;
e.g., whether candidates came up before 30 day or 90 day boards.

2. Factors influencing officer candidate school leadership ratings--

The purpose of this study would be to analyze the present criterion of leadership--to determine the degree of its dependence on such factors as physique and bearing, and academic achievement. If officer candidate school leadership ratings are valid, one of the most direct methods for devising methods of predicting them is to analyze the factors influencing them. The analysis of the criterion is one of the basic principles of personnel and industrial psychology. Since intra-platoon and instructor ratings both enter into the final rating, each should be made the subject for study.

Separate analyses should be made of intra-platoon and instructor ratings. One method would be to take two groups of candidates, one rated high and the other rated low. Then gather independent ratings of their physique, general bearing, academic rating, educational level, and any other characteristics which seemed important.

3. Attempt to develop a new criterion-- The purpose of this study would be to develop a criterion which would not have to be derived from general ratings. Thus far, in attempting to determine whether men are good or bad leaders, it has been necessary to ask either their fellows, followers, or superior officers to rate them. This involves the difficulties related to unanchored scales and the fact that the raters must try to think back on their observations of the individuals rated. It may be possible to develop a list of observations of leader-follower interactions which would be useable either in officer candidate schools or in units. A list of this type would provide a more direct basis for rating men for leadership. It is assumed that a successfully developed list would provide a basis for showing that an individual now is or is not a good leader.

The proposed procedure would be as follows:

- a. Interview combat officers who have seen action, to gather ideas about important leader group interactions.
- b. Interview instructor-platoon leaders at officer candidate schools and any others who are close to the problem.
- c. Observe a number of squads in field problems at OCS.
- d. From the ideas and suggestions gained in a, b, and c, draw up a first draft of a series of leader-follower interactions.
- e. Try out observation list in actual field situations studying the agreement between raters and the frequency with which items are checked.

If satisfied that observation sheet will work, write up hypothetical description of leaders based on various types of profiles that could be derived from sheet. Ask officers and enlisted men of some experience to indicate which description provides the best fit to the best platoon leader they have known.

Development of Measurement Techniques

Thus far, the study of leadership tests has been confined to sampling populations in officer candidate school. This sample is narrow in scope since we may assume that officer candidates represent selected populations in terms of leadership as well as academic aptitude. To expand the sample populations the following groups should also be tested.

a. Enlisted men (non-officer candidates) with General Classification Test scores of 110 and above.

b. Officers with combat experience--Those accessible would necessarily be small in number.

1. "Runner Test"- L-1, X-1-- This test should be given another trial, trying Copeland's method of scoring.

2. Preference Test PL-1, X-1-- Future work with this test will depend on results of analysis of data on hand.

3. Strong Vocational Interest Test-- It is possible that an individual's vocational attitudes are related to his susceptibility towards becoming a good leader. Perhaps individuals who have attitudes typical of men in business contact fields are more susceptible toward becoming good leaders. Perhaps a man's susceptibility of becoming a good leader is related to the arm or service in which he would operate in relation to his vocational attitudes. The probability of either of these hypotheses may not be very great, but the more unsuccessful we are in finding an effective measurement technique the more we should try "long shots" that have some plausibility. We might start by testing one or two platoons in an officer candidate school.

4. Goodenough-Thurstone Free Association Technique-- The measurement of personality by projective techniques has a great deal of face validity insofar as projection is intimately associated with our concepts of personality. Their chief drawback is that they do not appear amenable to group administration or objective interpretation. As a projective type of measurement which is practical for the present Army selection program, the Goodenough-Thurstone method should be given a full trial. Appended are lists of homonymic stimulus words used by Goodenough and Thurstone. These lists should be revised and expanded. Lorge's Semantic Frequency Count should aid in selection of homonyms which have frequently used interpretations. After a list is developed, it should be tried out on enlisted men with General Classification Test scores of 110 or greater. Goodenough's idea of presenting it as a speed of association test looks like a good one. After the list is revised on the basis of this trial, it should be given to classes at two or more officer candidate schools as well as to combat officers. From criteria groups based on leadership ratings in officer candidate school, an attempt to key the test would be made. We might then attempt to differentiate enlisted men, officer candidates and combat officers.

5. Selecting valid line officer interviewers-- The study of the validity of the leadership ratings of line officer interviewers showed that there was a considerable degree of variation between interviews. We may prove more successful in developing a technique for selecting better judges to sit on officer candidate selection boards than in developing a method of measuring leadership directly.

This study requires a situation where it would be possible to have 10 to 16 interviewers interview at least 50 candidates each. It may be necessary to set up a design of experiment of the field plot type used in agricultural research. For example, groups of 10 officer interviewers would interview two or more classes of candidates, one group to a class at two or more schools. The covariances could be analyzed between schools, between classes and between individuals.

Intensive studies of the interviewers would be made, using life history and test data. Life history and test data would then be studied in relation to the interviewer's success as a judge of leadership ability. It is possible that these data will provide a practical method for selecting officers to sit on officer candidate selection boards.

6. The comparison of the validity of judgments of a line officer interviewer and of a trained clinical psychologist.-- This is a study which could be added to the one above. It would provide some basis for estimating the improvement in leadership selection to be expected by specifying more technical psychologically trained officers for selection boards. It would involve a comparison of two types of interviews the pure life history oriented and the interview observation types. The emphasis in the line officer interviews should continue to be the one outlined in AGO Form 240. The clinical psychologist interviewer should be one whose training presumably permits him to work into his judgments observations of behavior in the interview. He should be able to use the interview to produce reactions which will give opportunities for judgment making.

7. The development of situational methods of measuring decisiveness and ability to undergo physical strain.-- Situational methods of studying leadership ability are virtually untried and untested. The rationale behind this type of measurement is one which is applied with considerable success in personnel; namely, that as test situations approach the status of miniatures of the behavior to be predicted, they improve in validity. The difficulties in implementing this method for prediction of leadership is largely responsible for its neglect. However, it is possible that practical tests could be developed, if specific leadership behaviors are chosen to be predicted. In reading discussions of combat leadership, one gains the impression that, aside from actual military knowledge, decisiveness of action and the ability and desire to push oneself in the face of severe physical strain are important characteristics of good leadership. It may be possible to devise situations that would reflect potential ability for these aspects of leadership.

The following are examples of situations that might work:

a. Decisiveness or willingness to commit oneself.-- Tell the candidate to assume that he is the commander of a company and feels that his men are low in morale. As one of the ways of building up their morale, he chooses to try to give them a good fighting slogan.

The candidate is then presented with a list of slogans in which he is told that his first task is to rank these slogans for aggressiveness. He should be cautioned to disregard judgments as to their general value. The slogans should all be simply stated so as to eliminate any verbal factors. They should represent a very narrow range of aggressiveness. The time taken to arrive at a ranking might be an objective index of decisiveness. More subjective types of observations would be those directed at interpretations of the candidates' attitudes toward the situation through oral introspections, facial expression, body positions, degree of tension or relaxation.

b. Willingness to undergo physical (and/or psychological) strain.-- The situation chosen should be one involving a reasonable degree of physical fitness and the subject's willingness to undergo strain. It is possible that a variation of the step-test might work. The degree to which the subject has

pushed himself as indicated by his pulse rate when he stops may be a significant indicator of his willingness to push himself. The candidate would be told that he should keep going as long as he can and that the length of time will be his score.

It is possible that the best way to work out these tests is in consultation with officers at an officer candidate school. In this way it would be possible to keep practical limitations in mind.

Training and Evaluation Studies

At this stage it is not possible to be very definite in the suggestion of studies in this area. It seems probable that the best ideas would be developed by having a representative spend a period of time at an officer candidate school. The procedures outlined in connection with the discussion of the development of a new criterion of leadership should also lead to the development of training methods. In thinking about situations which would reflect leadership, one should find situations which could be introduced into the officer candidate school training program. The kind of criterion developed in the method cited above would lend itself to use for evaluation of training.